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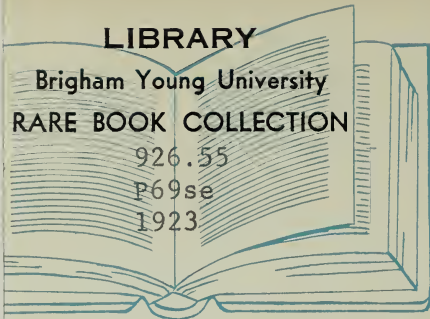
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CHRISTOPHER
PLANTIN





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Dr MAURITS SABBE

CHRISTOPHER
PLANTIN

TRANSLATED FROM THE FLEMISH

BY

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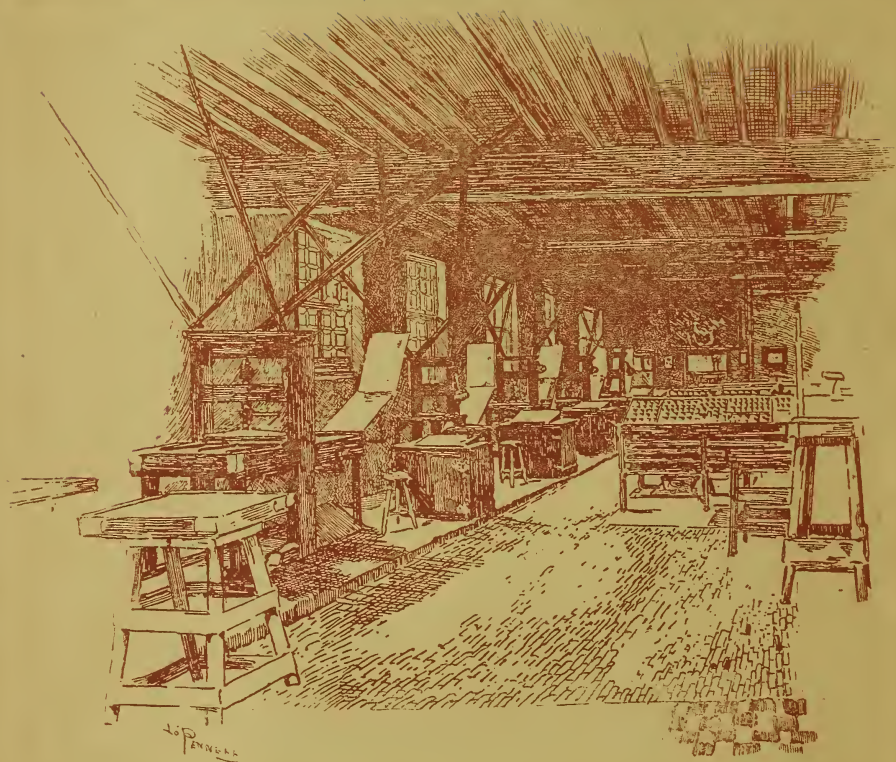
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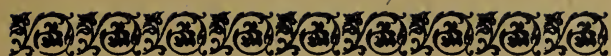


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CHRISTOPHER PLANTIN

BORN : ST. AVERTIN NEAR
TOURS 1520; DIED : ANTWERP 1589

WHEN one considers that a hard childhood embitters and disheartens those that are not exceptionally endowed, then the remarkable riches of Plantin's inner being is sufficiently proved by the fact that, notwithstanding such a childhood and a joyless youth, he continued to have faith in life and to struggle undauntedly against countless and ever anew supervening difficulties, at long last forcing fate itself, and leaving to coming generations the image of a finely thinking personality, possessed of a wonderful strength of will.

In his youth, besides other adversities, Plantin knew all the hardships

of a poor man's life. At an early age, and in tragic circumstances, he lost his mother during a plague, which caused the father to flee with his child. That father, bound as valet to his masters, could not trouble himself much about the boy, and that is how it came to pass that he left his son, with but a small sum of money, behind in Paris to contrive for himself. He was still but a lad, when he found himself alone facing the necessities of life; but he soon found out the only way of controlling and dominating them, and that way he adopted without hesitating. Work became his shield and his weapon.

Driven by a kind of natural instinct, as he once told the Duke Mathias, he applied himself to the art of printing and book-binding, and bound himself apprentice to Robert Macé et Caen, where Jeanne Rivière took pity on him and married him about the year 1546. She too, like him, had nothing but her hands to work with. That is what Plantin wrote in later years to his daughter Madeleine, when

she begged him for support : « We never had anything from our parents but charges and costs, and first started housekeeping with the sole work of our hands. » They had no other treasures than « assiduous work, sobriety and thrift » (1).

At first they lived in Paris, where Plantin occupied himself chiefly with book-binding and the working of morocco-leather, but it is to be supposed that his hopes were not answered, and so he chose another locality to try his fortune in.

It is then that he dreamed of the sumptuous and imperial merchant town of Antwerp, of the *preclara et famosa citta*, the *bella, nobilissima et amplissima citta*, about which Guicciardini was so enthusiastic, and which irresistibly attracted the young French journeyman, as it attracted so many other enterprising minds all through Europe. It was in 1549 that Plantin came and settled down in Antwerp with his small family.

The dour worker certainly did not

come there for the wealth and prosperity of the town, for its « pomp and splendours », for its « wedding banquets and balls », with at all times « merry ringing and singing ». What appealed to him was not the town arising like a gigantic hall of revelry on the banks of the river Scheldt, and where, according to Plantin's own words some time later, the people worked three days in a week, and made merry on the remaining four, and where Tryntje Cornelisdr. of pleasant memory, lived to experience her sensually quaint adventure. What he longed for, was the town of enterprising merchants that kept up relations with the whole world, the town of foreigners bringing thither from the four quarters of the globe all they possessed, all their mental and material riches, to make of Antwerp « Un cornet d'abondance de sçavoir et de biens ». (A Horn of Plenty of knowledge and wealth); the town of learned humanitarian pioneers in various domains, and of those royal printers of books :

the Silvius, the Steelsius, the Bellerus, Nutius, Vorstemans, De Laets, Van der Loe and so many others, that had made of Antwerp the most important centre of sixteenth century typography.

Besides, Plantin himself one day, in a letter to Pope Gregory XIII, admitted that he had come to Antwerp, because this town, more than any other, offered great facilities for the carrying on of a printer's business, of which he so well understood the higher intellectual and moral import.

When we look at the portraits of Plantin and his : « comère Jehanne » painted by Rubens, at the bidding of their grandson, Balthazar Moretus, we are immediately struck by the clear perception of the inner being that the features of these two people vouchsafe.

Christopher Plantin has the sagacious, thoughtful head of a Huguenot, of a kind of laic ascetic, but with at the same time the speaking features and the bright eye of the practical, skilfully-diplomatic man of business. There is



The
Room of
Justice Lipin
PANTIN
Museum

REVISED
MAY 1890

a dreamy expression in the face, which speaks of an intense spiritual life, and yet there is also a something cold in it, a something cerebral and calculating, that testifies to an acute, irrepressible longing to reach an honoured rank among his fellow-creatures. His is at all events the image of a man, with whom the material pleasures of life were ever of the smallest possible account, and with such a portrait before us, we understand that Arias Montanus once wrote of Plantin : « There is nothing material (no matter) in that man, all is mind, he neither drinks nor sleeps. »

« Mademoselle his beloved housewife », as Pierre Moerentorf calls her, does not give the same impression of spirituality; she has the typical face of the solicitous, not always smiling « mother wife », who, in the home, rules over children and menials, sometimes herself puts her shoulder to the wheel, and is at all times the true help and stay of her husband.

There was no one better able to

judge her than Justus Lipsius, who was an intimate of the house, and as such knew dame Jehanne very well. He wrote : « She was a most virtuous woman, without any false get up, without vanity; she loved her husband and was admirably versed in all things concerning the proper management of a household, and she bestowed all the necessary care on her housekeeping ».

And very unfeministically the learned professor adds : « For a woman, that must be enough. She that is not satisfied with such eulogium, will probably acquire a large number of shortcomings instead of virtues. The woman that is more learned than befits a woman is not wise ».

In the small dwelling of the « Lombaardevest », and later in the « Twaalfmaandenstraat », where Plantin passed his first years in Antwerp, he first went on binding books and making morocco-leather shrines, boxes and pasteboard cases, as he had done in Paris, but a regular cut-throat story, of which he became the victim, com-

pelled him to give up all that. One evening, some obstreperous, masked drunkards mistook him for a guitar-player that had insulted them, and with a sword, they gave him a thrust that very nearly cost him his life. He recovered, but found himself physically unable to go on with book-binding and working leather, and so he set up as a printer. One is tempted to call the crime in question a *Felix culpa*, as it was probably the cause of Plantin taking the road that was to lead him to fame. No longer had he to earn his daily bread « *en liant des volumes* », as he says in one of his poems, but he was going to write books « *à la presse sans plumes* ».

We are struck by the great esteem which, from the very beginning of his career, Plantin shows for intellectual faculties, and in his printer's trade — as witnessed by his own words — he saw a means of having intercourse with the learned and of working at their side and with them, for the spreading of knowledge and of art.

*Ne pouvant être
Poète, écrivain ne maistre,
J'ay voulu poursuivre
Le trac, chemin, ou trace,
Par où leur bonne grace
Je pourrais acquérir.*

(Unable to be a poet, a writer or a master, it has been my wish to follow the track, the way or the trace, by means of which I might get to be in their good graces).

In Plantin's so remarkable correspondence, which we use for the drawing of this sketch, many wise truths are to be found regarding the importance of book-binding and the value of study and culture of the mind, truths, which, as winged words, ought to be known everywhere. Among other things he says : « As for me, I have always esteemed that the teaching of the youth of a country, and all that depends thereof, as writing, printing and books, is surely of as great an importance for the king as money itself, or any other thing existing ».

A man who had so clearly per-



ceived that culture of the mind could enable him, a simple workman, to approach those that ranked first among his contemporaries, naturally kept a sharp watch over the instruction of his children and grandchildren.

We are not surprised to hear that from their earliest youth he taught them to fear, honour and love God, the King, all magistrates and superiors, and to help their mother about the house, but we are rather taken aback, when we hear, that, deeming his children at the age of from four to twelve too weak for heavy work, he gave them proofs in several languages to correct. Though it is to be supposed that the proof-correcting in question was no more than a comparing, without understanding, of a text newly in type, with a printed model, yet even then it is an exercise that we would not think of devising for our present day children.

And the five daughters of Plantin, all worked at that job, to the best of their abilities. Madeleine, the fourth, was the most clever. She read the He-

brew, Syriac and Greek texts, which, as a thirteen year old lassie, she had to take to Arias Montanus, who at that time was staying at the house of Jan van Straelen, to conduct the printing of the famous Biblia regia. It was she also, who at an age when our children think of nothing but fun and frolic, had on Saturdays to pay the workmen, and watch that they all did their duty. Margaret too, when a child, was remarkably quick-witted. She became, according to Plantin : « Une des meilleurs plumes de tous les païs de par deçà pour son sexe. » (One of the best writers (calligraphers) of her sex). He sent her to Paris that she might « better learn the good strokes of the pen of a certain excellent calligrapher, who at that time was showing the King how to write ». An eye-disease came and put a stop to her calligraphic studies. Henriette, the youngest, was the least endowed. When she was eight years old, says her father, she did not do anything yet but help her mother with the housekeeping. At that time she did not

yet correct proofs : « Pour la tardivité de son esprit lent. » (Because of the tardiness of her slow brain). It was a work the girls did in the correctors' room, and if they gave it up when twelve years old, it was because Plantin did not think it proper that at that age they should be in the company of men.

Having proofs corrected was also one of Plantin's little ways of being a good grandfather, of his : « Art d'être grand-père ». His grandsons too, when staying with him, had to put their hands to the job. Christopher Beys, the son of Egide or Gilles and of Madeleine Plantin, once, as a punishment, had to narrate in a Latin composition, how he had spent the day. That composition which has been kept, gives us a characteristic sample of Plantin's system of education.

Here follows a translation of this singular task :

« Occupations of Christopher Beys, February 21st 1587. I got up at half past six. I went to embrace grandfather and grandmother. After that I had my

breakfast. Before seven I went to school and recited well my syntax lesson. At eight o'clock I heard mass. At half past eight I learned my lesson from Cicero and recited it well. At eleven I returned home and learnt my lesson of phraseology. In the afternoon I went back to school, and recited my lesson well. At half past three I recited correctly my lesson from Cicero. At four o'clock I went to hear the sermon. I got home before six, and with my cousin Frank (Frans Raphelengius) I read a proof-sheet of *Libellus Sodali-tatus*. I was rebellious over the reading of the proof-sheets of the Bible. Before supper grandfather had me told to go to him and tell him what the sermon had been about, and I refused to go; even when the others advised me to go and beg grandfather's pardon, I refused to answer. In short, I showed myself haughty, obstinate, stiff-headed towards everybody. After supper I wrote down my occupations of the day, and read them aloud to grandfather. The end crowns the work ».



These were not the only punishments, however, by means of which Plantin endeavoured to eradicate all objectionable propensities in his children. In one of his letters there is a passage, in which he speaks characteristically of the use of the rod as a means of correction. He approves the use of the rod, and declares that, even after chastisement, the child may not be sulkily disposed towards the instrument used for its correction : « Which the father compels him, for his mortification, to kiss, even while his buttocks are still smarting with pain ». A father must be filled with affection for his child, he writes elsewhere, but he himself and not the child must know what is for its good. He condemns those fathers : « too fickle, credulous and slaves of their children » who imagine that they help their children on in life by indulging their every whim. There is another letter in which he shows what store he sets by paternal chastisement; it is the one sent to another of his grandsons, Christopher Raphelen-

gius, whom he had caught tripping, and was written to incite the lad to confess his fault. In case the boy refused to do so, then grandfather was going to tell the father all about it !

Not only with children does Plantin show this strong sense of authority with all its rights and duties. In his lifetime he had to make use of it more often, probably, than he cared for.

Marguerite married Raphelengius and Martine became the wife of Jan Moerentorf or Moretus. Those two sons-in-law were dearer than any others to Plantin, because they were the most like him, and possessed a love for study allied to a scrupulous sense of duty; he called them his « deux autres moy-mêmes aux deux principaux points de mon état. » (My two other selves, with regard to the two principal points of my business). Proof-reading and printing were for the first, while the shop and book-keeping were the latter's concern. Plantin gave his daughter Marguerite in marriage to the learned philologist.

for « his sole virtues and knowledge, foreseeing that he would one day be useful to the Christian republic, » — which, as a matter of fact, meant that Plantin foresaw how useful Raphelengius could be to him in his printer's office. Besides, he candidly admits as much in another letter, when he writes : « I met a young man, well versed in the Hebrew, Chaldaic, Greek and Latin languages, to whom, so as to have him near me and to make intercourse easier, and because of the hope I had of in time being able to do something for the public weal, and because of his learning and rare virtues, I have given my eldest daughter in marriage » (2). It was also the learning of Jan Moretus which first struck him. That courter of Martine he describes as « a rather expert young man, and well versed in the Greek, Latin, Spanish, Italian, French, German and Flemish languages. » He also praises his attachment : « He has always served me, in bad as in good times, without deserting me because of things that befell me, or for the sake

of promises or allurements of others, even when they proposed to him richer matches and offered higher salaries than it was in my power to give him » (3). It must be said that Plantin has been always well assisted by these sons-in-law. With the others matters went less smoothly. Catherine, his third daughter, a clever business woman and good at book-keeping, made herself useful in the linen and lace-business, which his wife had set up shortly after their marriage. Catherine was sent to Paris, to Pierre Gassen, who represented that same lace-business there, and whose nephew, Jean Gassen, became the young woman's husband. Already in the first months of their marriage, Plantin had to interfere in order to restore the broken peace in the household.

First some echoes of family squabbles reach us. Jean Gassen and Catherine were living with their uncle, with whose daughters the Antwerp young woman did not seem to get on well. She declined to do « a chamber-maid's

work, which was expected of her, did not want to get up early in the morning, refused to assume household duties, was guilty of other « sottises légères » (foolish frivolities), whereon her husband reacted with other complications, as for instance by forbidding her to accompany him to the wedding of one of his aunts. And so one thing gave rise to another. Unpleasant things were said reciprocally about the respective families, and at length the situation became so strained that Plantin had to interfere.

He does so in two remarkably beautiful letters, wherein he puts all his heart. It makes him sad and heavy-hearted, to hear that his children do not get on together. When he first heard that such was the case, he was filled with a « just wrath » against his daughter, and also against his son-in-law, who had reproached him with approving that Catherine showed herself « haughty, despotical, disdainful, lazy and proud ». Plantin writes to him words, which, as he says himself, come

from his innermost heart ,as a leaping flame, which burns him there. He shows them that he has « blood at the nails » (du sang aux ongles). But, reflecting on « human fragility », he abandons his wrathful tones, and writes as a real patriarch, as a wise, moral counsellor.

Pride and self-conceit are at the root of all that evil, and Plantin's best remedy for such things is humility, the gist of his own way of life. Over and over again he sings its praises and recommends it to all. Humility is the moral basis of his being, which humility, as the years went by, developed more and more, finding satisfaction in the mysticism of a Niclaes and a Barrefelt.

To Jean Gassen he writes : I feel I have no higher duty, and what is more there is nothing I shall try besides helping my children to acquire a real humbleness of heart, which is the fountain and the source of all heavenly good, and renders that of the earth sufficient. Catherine he admonishes to

remember that she is no better than her father and mother, and : « that it is necessary to carefully, diligently, heartily and humbly serve those to whom we are beholden or attached. » He tries to impose on Catherine by telling her to take example by him, her father : He got up early and was always willing to do even the most menial work. » Do not consider yourself too dignified to do even the most abject things that may have to be done in a house. »

Plantin's moralizing very easily acquires a dash of mystical religiosity : « Consider that neither you, nor I, nor your husband are other than such lumps of flesh, as the lowest on this earth. » Whatever betide, Catherine may not allow any » plant of pride, vainglory and arrogance to blossom in her heart. Later he gives the same advice to his daughter Madeleine : « To be humble, to suffer and endure patiently and willingly all that which it will please God to send to you. » Those were « the most beautiful, the



J. P. ENNELL

richest and best gift he could bestow on her. » The Ten Commandments and her father's will must be Catherine's guidance in days of trouble. And Jean too, must try to fully realize the deep meaning of the decalogue, for only by living according to that divine law, can authority be acquired and sustained. We must practise it with all our heart, sense and will-power, before having any authority at all. « We ought to be ashamed to command anything to anybody, unless to ourselves, while we feel and find that we do not obey the commandments of our Lord, to whom we ourselves, our wives, our children, our menials belong, and whom we all must serve, as also each one of our neighbours, for love of Him. »

It remains a question whether all that wise and pious advice bore fruit. Plantin himself seems at times to have doubted the efficiency of his words. When writing those letters, he feels as if he were : « a preacher in the pulpit, vainly preaching to a sleeping or to a forgetful congregation. » He

admits that much to Jean Gassen, but says that he does so none the less, because he looks upon it as a sacred duty.

He was not to be troubled long, however, with Catherine's household concerns. She became a widow when hardly twenty-two years of age. Her husband, while travelling in the Netherlands was killed by robbers. Plantin and his wife went to Paris to fetch the young widow, and brought her back, with her children, to the home of her childhood.

The young widow did not lack suitors; among others there was the Parisian Marcelin le Poivre, who asked her hand in marriage, but Plantin wrote him a friendly refusal, showing, that, in spite of everything he nourished a very deep affection for his children : « I see that she is so pleased to stay with us a while, and so loved by those that have been brought up and educated with her, and neither she nor we like the idea that she should again go to a foreign country. »

Plantin sent the lover, as a token

of friendship, and perhaps also to... comfort him : « deux petites bende-lettes à faire frase. » Shortly after, Catherine married H. Arents, known also as Jan Spierinck.

The marriage of his daughter Madeleine with Gilles Beys was a source of still greater troubles to Plantin. Some years before, Beys had been Plantin's shopboy, but in 1567 he became the head of Plantin's book-shop in Paris, and later he started business on his own account.

Some time before Madeleine's marriage, Plantin wrote to her, admonishing her to : « be on her guard with men, to trust no man on earth with regard to the flesh or sensual pleasures and abuses, which might be presented to her from a distance to attract and mislead. » When the question of marrying arose, she had to appeal to the will of the Lord, to her father and mother. All that did not deter Madeleine, then hardly fifteen years old, from marrying Beys some few months later. The wedding was celebrated with

« great gladness and rejoycing, thank heaven, without any trouble. » But barely had the young couple stepped into Hymen's boat, when there came an end to the fun.

In the beginning Beys, like Jan Moretus and Raphelingius, showed Plantin the greatest respect. « All that the master will do, will be well done and agreeable, » as he writes to his « brother and friend » Jehan Moretus: but very soon all that was changed. In 1577, after Plantin had sold his Paris branch-establishment with all it contained and with the monopoly of his publications to the bookseller Michel Sonnius, then more than ever the relations between father and son-in-law became highly strained. Beys, who constantly found himself in pecuniary difficulties, wrote angry letters, full of envy, to Plantin, and more especially to J. Moretus. Beys « disgorges his impatience in abusive language; » he declares that Plantin is ruining him. He sarcastically pretends that he prays to God, that one day Plantin may know



the pleasures he has caused him, his son-in-law. All the letters Beys sends to Antwerp contain either ironic scorn or complaints and entreaties.

Plantin's answers invariably amounted to this : that he was willing to help Beys by procuring him work, but that he refused to keep him. He always tried to spur on the younger man to some show of will-power and self-help. In consequence of his own pecuniary embarrassments, Plantin could not give Beys what he wanted. Besides, he condemned his son-in-law's exactions. He declared Beys's claims to be as « uncivil and non acceptable as would be those of a strong and robust young man, who, to walk alone, would try and persuade his old and decrepit father to let him have for always the stick of which he, the old father, made use to walk himself (4).

Plantin however never ceased to be of a forgiving nature. To Beys he writes : « Thank heaven, I bear no ill-will to any, for anything they may have done to me or mine. » To Made-

leine he says the same, only more explicitly, with much kindness though at the same time with a certain moral loftiness : « You may rest assured that neither your mother nor I bear in mind, nor yet shall bear in mind in future, any past faults of yours that have been confessed, so as to bear you any grudge or despite, knowing as we do that the ignorant are likely to err, but it is your duty not to forget those faults, so as to avoid the evil that might follow » (5).

There is a philosophical equanimity in his way of accepting slander and insinuation, of which samples not devoid of a certain humour are to be found in his letters. For instance this, what he writes to Beys : « As regards what people say and suppose, experience has already so well taught me, that I care about it as much as would a man, who, having a large abscess on his foot, gets himself some footgear made according to his sore, without troubling himself about what the vulgar may say, instead of forcing his foot with the aforesaid abscess in such a

way, so that in the end he were compelled, because of his risking, to lose not only his foot but also his leg, and perhaps even the life of the remainder of his body ».

When we consider Plantin's character and more especially the gigantic work he achieved, then we arrive at the conclusion that he chose the golden compasses with the words « *Labore et Constantia* » as printer's motto and also as the motto of his life, not only in accordance with the taste of our forefathers for terse and pithy emblems and aphorisms, but more so because he was aware therein to find the rendering of the principles which were to vouchsafe him through life the most powerful and surest support. The one fixed point of the compasses symbolizes the tenacious, unwavering steadfastness, which Plantin, notwithstanding all possible difficulties and reverses, never failed to display in the achieving of an accepted task; and the other point of the compasses describing a circle, stands for the never slackening

work embracing the widest horizons of the intellect, which has rendered the great printer immortal. Plantin was wont to complete that enumerating of vital virtues by adding those of humility and patience. For instance in 1558, the year before his death, he wrote on the rough copy of a letter the following rhyme, which characterizes him completely :

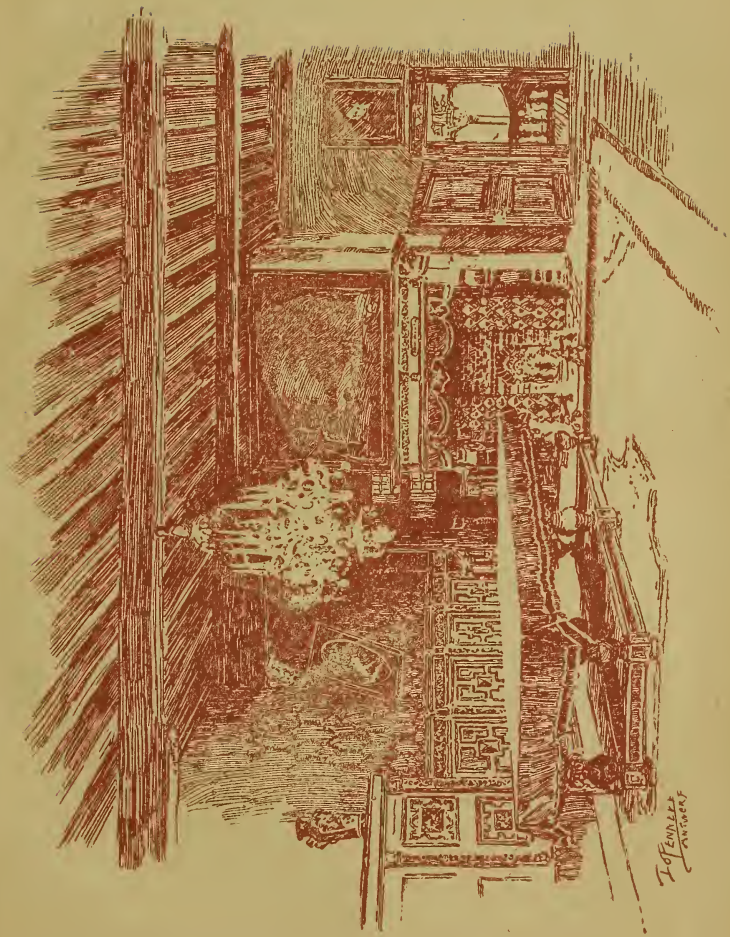
*Un Labeur courageux muni d'humble Constance
Resiste à tous assauts par simple patience.*

(A courageous labour to which humble constancy is added, resists all attacks by means of simple patience).

Thanks to those qualities it did not take Plantin long to surpass the thirty printing establishments which were in full activity in Antwerp, when Plantin came to settle there. And it is not too strong a word, when one says that what he managed to achieve in that town is simply marvellous.

Among the sights of Antwerp described by Guicciardini, a Florentine nobleman, as « worthy to be viewed

with delight and pleasure », such as « the spire of the cathedral, the new Exchange, the Mint, the Townhall, the East-house, the wonderful furnace of Jacob Pesquet of Brescia, where crystal is made in the Venetian way », he expatiates with a special predilection on the extensive and beautiful printing establishment of Christopher Plantin. « Up till now », he writes, « there has never been seen nor is seen, in the whole of Europe, a similar, where there are more presses, more letters of all sorts, more prints and tools, more proper and capable men, earning higher wages with working, correcting and revising in all languages, strange as well as familiar ones, without any exception, so that, all things combined, in this house, with its adherents and dependencies, more than three hundred florins, that is more than one hundred and fifty crowns are spent on every work-day; which establishment, surely a noble and a royal one, not only redounds to the credit and honour of its worthy founder and head, but also to



that of the town itself ; for its beautiful and valuable works are sent and spread in large numbers all over the world. » And Plantin was fully aware of all that. He mentions it in a petition addressed to the town magistrates (1577) perhaps slighting rather too much all that had been done before him, with regard to typography : « Antwerp printing, of which formerly the words were used in neighbouring countries as by-words for things of little value, has since been admired, appreciated and sought after by all, under the names of Antwerp and Plantin, not only by our neighbours, and people of the middle-classes, but by foreign nations and by the greatest nobles of Europe, both ecclesiastic and laic » (6).

In another letter to the magistracy, he declares : « without boasting » to possess so many stamps, matrixes, presses, characters and figures, that all the printers in Europe assert never having seen so many together as in his establishment, and he repeats it once again in a letter to De Çayas.

It is a fact that Plantin's activity and influence as a printer made themselves felt far outside the boundaries of the Netherlands. He had uninterrupted business relations not only with Dutch, Flemish, and Brabant booksellers and printers, but Englishmen, Scotchmen, Germans, Italians, Swiss, Poles, Portuguese and Spaniards were among his faithful clients. Ever since 1567, Plantin had had a branch establishment in Paris; at Leyden Raphelengius carried on the business which the arch-printer had taken over from Silvius in 1583. He had business agents in Spain, later, a branch establishment at Salamanca, and was on the point of opening one in London. He disposed for the greatest part of his Hebrew bible, published in 1566, by the help of special agents, in the north-western region of Africa, between the Mediterranean and the Sahara, in so-called Barbaria. He sent books to America, and was one of the most regular and influential visitors at the Frankfort book-fairs. Those international book-fairs, which Henri Es-

tienne called « Academy or universal exhibition of the Muses », were held twice a year, in spring and autumn, and there assembled not only all the important publishers and editors, but also a great number of learned men of the period.

To be so very successful, Plantin had required not only perseverance and a true fondness for work, but he was also a good business man, far-sighted and with an enterprising spirit.

It is enough to glance at Plantin's ledgers, account-books, letters and other business papers, which are kept among the rich archives at the Plantin Museum, to be filled with respect for Plantin as a careful, and scrupulous man of business. Besides, in his letters we find many a typical instance giving evidence of the self-command he never lost when doing business, and of the deep insight into human nature which he possessed. He puts Beys on his guard against the bragging of certain merchants, who were trying to sell him chalk for cheese. « Such is the habit

of certain merchants », he writes, « and more particularly so of those that frequent Paris; they are always boasting and say : a hundred when it ought to be ten ! » But Plantin would not let himself be caught in that way : « Give them tit for tat », he advises Beys; « and when they say something likely, then see that you remain cool and collected and patiently await the issue, and you will find out that as a rule their chatter is nought but chatter. » Is not that a golden rule for all business men : « remain cool and collected » ? — And in Plantin's personality we sometimes discover even the less noble qualities of the merchant. As for instance, when he put himself to some trouble to be allowed to print, or to obtain some approbation or privilege, he did not scruple, by means of presents, to try and propitiate in his behalf, the persons in authority that had voice in the matter. That is how we find among his accounts of the year 1565, that in such circumstances he offered to the Chancellor at Brussels, 4 Au-

vergne cheeses, costing 15 « patards » each; 8 baskets of plums and pears, at 3 1/2 « patards » each, and also a fine bible, while he was equally generous with cheeses, plums, bibles and even with money on behalf of the parson of St. Gudule and other personages, who were able to assist him in getting the coveted privileges.

As an industrialist too, Plantin's qualities were remarkable. The management of a numerous staff, the advancing of considerable sums for paper and wages, the regulating of the work, and ever so many more cases called for an exceptional will-power and a great perspicacity. And his correspondence is sufficient evidence that things did not always go smoothly. « To be a printer does not suit everybody », he writes; « it does not suit him to whom it does not come by nature, or by a kind of divine inclination, added to a continuous and assiduous labour, and a firm assurance to be able to control himself with regard to his companions, who, as I have often found, generally are

malignant and faithless to their masters, and full of whims, especially when they know that their master has an enterprise in hand (7). Elsewhere he alludes to some particular cases of ill-will shown by his workmen, against which he had to take effectual measures. « The workmen of the printing-office, knowing that I had work to finish, had clubbed together against me, so that (besides money-need) I had been compelled to chase them from my house, and to pretend, that I was not going to print anything more, so that at length they returned, having sent to beg me to forgive them, and to let them come back to work (8). In another letter, he complains of the impossibility of getting ordered work ready in time. This could be done, if « by some laws, reasoning or conditions, the indolence, the drunkenness, and the malice of the workmen could be repressed and reduced to certain workdays » (9). We can well believe him, when he avers that for his trade are wanted : « a broadness and nimbleness of mind,

added to a continued diligence, assiduous labour, and a perpetual care, more than for the exercising of any other kind of work ».

Besides these difficulties with the workmen, Plantin, during a long period of his life, had to battle with many others of a financial nature.

The extensive orders given by the King of Spain, forced him to run deeply into debt. Philip II, whose financial situation was far from brilliant, failed to pay the promised relief-moneys and other sums owing. Yearly Plantin had to pay 25.000 florins as interest only of the loan contracted for the printing of the *Biblia regia*. By order of the King, he disbursed 50.000 florins solely for liturgical works, 36.000 for choir-books, etc., and it was many years before he saw any of that money back again. To all that had to be added the great losses occasioned by the Spanish Fury and other political occurrences of those troubled times. Throughout Plantin's correspondence, we find him complaining about pressure for money. He

begs and prays to obtain that which is owing him. He is so sorely dunned, that it makes him ill. He is forced to sell property, in order to satisfy his creditors, and several times he declares himself decided to give up printing all together.

He struggles with all those difficulties, as with a many-headed monster. That is how he puts it in his picturesque language, and we feel that he is not giving us some figure of speech, but the palpitating though condensed expression of the bitter feelings that rankle within him. To De Çayas he says : « The printing office is a regular chasm or whirlpool, into the jaws of which, by a steady and assiduous labour, one must try to always be throwing what is necessary, for otherwise it devours and swallows even its master and all those concerned. »

Plantin himself is astonished at having managed to conquer all these difficulties, and he writes, that all those who know him, must be greatly amazed and look upon it as a miracle, that a

man such as he has succeeded in bringing to a happy conclusion typographic enterprises of such magnitude, especially the publishing of the royal Antwerp Polyglotta.

Printers, booksellers and those that knew something about printing, had all laughed at him, and had gossiped abroad that he would never be able to finish such a work, if it were only because of the magnificence with which it had been begun and because of the trouble and the heavy expense incurred.

Plantin, true believer as he is, attributes to God all the honour of the successful enterprise : « I confess in all truth that this, and all the other works achieved by us, are the work of the Lord. Who, to His glory and honour, has given me the heart to undertake matters of so great an importance. » There is something touching in several of those pious confessions. They clearly show that what he took to heart most of all was not the hoarding of money, but the higher moral mean-

ing of his profession. He served the art of printing, of which he had the most exalted conception, with all the strength of his passionate soul. He felt himself to be the sower of the most noble seed : « The Lord in His kindness has given me the courage for it (the art of printing) to use and to wear away not only all the faculties that it has pleased Him to bestow upon me, but also all the favours and moneys that I ever managed to recover or to obtain from my friends and others. » 10). It is a fact that he was never ruled by greed for money. His only longing was to be able to live honestly and soberly with his family ; « I never felt and do not feel any greed after money or other particular profit, only wishing for myself and family, an honest and sober upkeep, such as is necessary among men and before God. » Later on in life, when materially his situation improved, his only dream was to be able to leave his printing business freed of all mortgages to his heirs. Even in days of heaviest money

stress, he always retained a noble bearing, so that we do not know what to praise most : his kindness, his courage or his pious resignation. Characteristic of the man are the following words, which, when still quite downhearted with the miseries of the Spanish Fury, he wrote to his friend Jean Moffin, who owed him some money : « As regards what you owe me, I fully entitle you to solicit of yourself, according to your convenience for helping me in my need, which is greater than I should like to show, notwithstanding that God in His mercy keeps up my courage, as I want it (to be kept up) and even enforces it with patience, in proportion as the urgent need increases » (11).

Though tortured by material want, he none the less found both spiritual and moral comfort in the consciousness that he had accomplished a great work. In his troubles there always remained : « a contentment of the mind because of having been, as it were, the

instrument used for so good and so pious an achievement. »

Plantin's gifts, as regards the intellectual management of his printer's and publisher's business, were very nearly those of a genius. He succeeded in making « The Golden Compasses » the centre, where from all parts of Europe, the most excellent contributors within the range of existing science, came together. The history of Plantin's publications and of his relations with the learned of his time, who entrusted their works to him, is a brilliant chapter of the history of humanism, not only in the Netherlands, but in the whole civilised West. During the first half of his career, until the Spanish Fury (1576) Plantin's publishing office is the nucleus of the real Renaissance spirit of daring, of the undaunted thirst for knowledge, that never retreated before any great enterprise.

It is not our intention to sum up here all the learned men with whom Plantin kept up a correspondence, who visited him in Antwerp, who stayed at

his house, and with him formed friendships proof against all possible doubt. They are well-known, those men of great renown, that honoured Plantin with their esteem and hearty affection. The learned Orientalist and theologian Arias Montanus, who at the bidding of Philip II of Spain, wrenched himself away from his pious meditations in the hermitage of Aracena, to come and edit at Antwerp in the years from 1568 to 1572, the famous *Biblia sacra hebraice, chaldaice, graece et latine.*, the so called Antwerp Polyglotta, which rendered Plantin's name immortal; the geographer Abraham Ortelius, whose fine atlases Plantin published; the numismatologist Hubert Goltzius, Sambucus, whose *Emblemata* Plantin made popular; the mathematician S. Stevin; Cardinal Baronius, the author of the *Annales ecclesiastici*; R. Dodoens, Ch. de l'Escluse (Clusius), M. de Lobel, the three eminent botanists, who each had a remarkable « Herbarium » published at Plantin's; the renowned Justus Lipsius, D. Hu-

naeus, D. Goudanus, Rediger, Masius, J. Isaac and so many others, too numerous to be mentioned here, belonged to that sort of academy of which Plantin was the soul, and of which the members remained on the most friendly terms with one another, either because of personal intercourse, or else by keeping up a correspondence, so that at times there came to Antwerp letters so numerous, that Plantin likened them to a « bevy of starlings ». It fills one with wonder to see how Plantin, the simple typographer, who never went to any university, managed to force the respect of the greatest minds of his time.

He once wrote to his faithful patron de Çayas, secretary to Philip II that he did not want to occupy himself with the work of the learned : « As to meddle with trying to particularize, to examine the assertions, probations, confutations, refutations or other similar scholastic things, I confess not to know anything about it, and that it is neither my vacation nor vocation, and

what is more, that I have neither the wish and even less the time, to devote a single little half-hour to it ». Other letters, however, as also the choice of the works he published, sufficiently prove, that in reality Plantin possessed a clear insight into the learned matter he published, and that he judged independently of the value of its authors, although his judgments were always given most respectfully and with the greatest modesty.

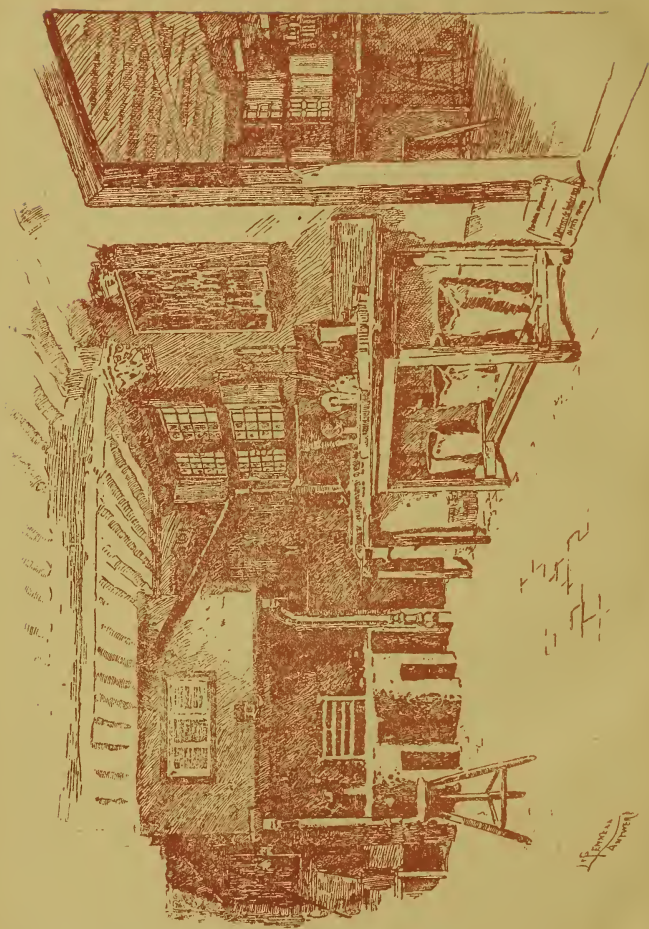
Plantin's many virtues and his way of looking at life aided largely in making him the familiar of so many personalities of high standing. Can one imagine a more striking homage to moral qualities, than the letter from the Louvain student Charles d'Assonville, who begs him to be allowed to become his friend, because he, Charles, had heard so much about Plantin's virtues, commended by all. And is there a better means of sounding a person's praises, than by writing these words, which are part of a letter written by Arias Montanus to De Çayas: «Ne-

ver before have I met with anybody combining so great a capacity with so much kindness, and who knew and practised virtue better than he. Each day I find something to praise in him, and more than any other thing his great humility and his patience. » That humility is apparent even in small particulars of his daily intercourse. He asks Sassenus and other Louvain booksellers that congratulate him upon his being appointed royal « hooftprinter », (chief printer) not to use any honorific titles when writing to him, and he likewise requests Lefèvre de la Boderie, not to call him « doctissime ».

It strikes one, that, among Plantin's so varied correspondence, there are hardly any letters addressed to those artists, draughtsmen and engravers, who worked for him in so great a number.

The host of learned men whose works were published by Plantin, is a brilliant one, but not less important and radiant is the galaxy of graphic artists, who ornamented his books. We

here give the names of the draughtsmen Pieter van der Borcht and Crispyn van den Broeck of Malines; Godefroid Ballain from Paris, Luc. d'Heere from Ghent; Marten de Vos and Pieter Huys from Antwerp; of the wood-engravers A. Nicolai, A. van Leest, G. Jansen, Corn. Muller, W. van Parys, Jean de Gourmont, Marc Duchêne, Jean Crisoone; of the copper-plate engravers A. de Bruyn, J. Sadeler, the brothers Jan and Hieronymus Wierix, topees and rakes but possessing genius, P. van der Heyden, J. Coltzius, and then also P. Dufour from Liege. Plantin seems to have entertained friendly relations with hardly any of them. After the sack of Malines by the Spaniards, in 1572, he took in Pieter van der Borcht with his household, and it is apparent from some of his letters, that he had a feeling of real sympathy for Crispyn van den Broeck. But there are few other such instances if any. Must that lead us to infer that Plantin set greater store by the esteem of the learned than by that



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of the artists ? Was it not perhaps, that in his eyes those draughtsmen, wood and copper-plate engravers were no more than clever craftsmen, whose art he valued for the ornamenting of his work, but with whom he did not seek to have intercourse of mind ? If besides that we consider, that he, who so often expresses his admiration for knowledge and learning, never once wrote an appreciative word with regard to the art of drawing or engraving or to art in general, then we cannot refrain from wondering if Plantin really had much feeling for art ? Did he not write at one time to Arias Montanus, that he had never had a picture made of himself, because he considered it an act of vanity to do so ? This way of thinking, which reposed chiefly on moral and religious grounds, got modified in later years, but at all events it betrays a certain side of Plantin's innerman, which, at a certain period anyway, seemed anything but prepossessed in favour of a certain form of art. In opposition to that, however, we have the

fact that Plantin always obtained the co-operation of first-rate artists, and that his editions give evidence to the best of tastes. All that makes it incontestable that he must have possessed a well trained artistic judgment.

Two sources of many difficulties, of great danger even to Plantin, were religion and politics, which in the troublous years of his sojourn in Antwerp, threw the minds into such a passionate state of ferment, and gave rise to so many bloody conflicts. The very nature of their business placed all printers in the midst of the strife. J. van Liesvelt was beheaded for having printed forbidden books; J. Roelants and P. van Keerberghé were thrown into prison for the same reason. With Plantin things never went quite so far; as a fact, his bearing with regard to the contending parties caused him more than once to be accused of double-dealing.

Several times he was suspected of nourishing calvinistic sympathies. In 1562 all his property was declared forfeit and sold, on discovery that he had,

in 1561, printed the heretical booklet « *Brieve instruction pour prier* ». The searching of the house, with the arrest of the whole family, the serving-maid included, is one of the favourite subjects of Antwerp painters, who, down to some years ago, helped to keep alive a kind of Plantin-romanticism. Plantin, who, in the last days of December 1561, had fled to Paris, at all times denied having printed the book in question. Three of his workmen were punished for it, and already in 1563 Plantin was allowed to return.

Several times, after that, he had to refute similar accusations, in 1563 for the opusculum of Pierre de Ravillan, *Instruction Chrestienne*, that appeared in 1562 with his address, and of which he declared not to be the printer. On the title-page of the copy, which is at the Plantin-Museum, he wrote that declaration himself, in the following words : « This printing is falsely attributed to me, for I did not do it nor cause it to be done. »

In order to re-establish his printing

business, Plantin went into a partnership with Goropius Becanus, C. and Ch. van Bombergh and Jacob Schott, who later became convinced calvinists. That also was brought up against Plantin, but did not embarrass him.

With regard to C. van Bromberghe he writes to Jean Mofflin, among other things, that he had certainly been his friend, but broke off with him completely as soon as he became aware of the man's calvinistic sympathies : « I requested him not to visit at my house, or, that if he wanted to continue his visits, he would do so less familiarly, as they might give rise to scandal. »... And then he adds one of those fervid professions of his catholic faith, such as he was wont to write to De Çayas and to many other patrons and friends : « I have never adhered to nor favoured any sectarians and neither to live nor to die am I willing to swerve from obedience to our most catholic King, our mother the Holy Church, in whose faith I am determined to live and die » (12).

This renunciation of C. van Brombergh did not deter Plantin from associating with other decided calvinists. The well known French preacher Hubert Languet, had chosen him as his confidential man in Antwerp, Metellus, Dousa, Alexander Grapheus and other members of the Reformed Church, were among his friends at a later period. After the Spanish fury, he is appointed printer of the States-General, and he publishes anti-Spanish pamphlets; and he also composes poems in honour of William of Orange, the Duke of Alençon and the Archduke Mathias. And again at a later period, from 1583 till towards the end of 1585, he establishes himself at Leyden, and becomes the printer of the young calvinistic university. All that was more than enough for Plantin to be looked upon by many catholics as a protestant in disguise, but he none the less at all times repudiated this accusation most emphatically. In doing so he showed himself very adroit : He worked for the States-General and for

the Leyden University, that was true, but he did that solely because the large sums, that the King of Spain owed him, had not yet been paid. He worked at a fixed salary, and had fixed duties to perform. If ever he printed anything against either King or Church, then it was under compulsion of either the States-General or the Archduke Mathias. He did not even look at the context of what he had to print, and those pamphlets were corrected by individuals who were absolute strangers to the business. If ever subversive works, bearing his name, appeared, he declares to Buyssetius, then they were things got up by jealous enemies, who wanted to work his ruin. And to Arias Montanus he writes, that he never printed anything that had not previously been approved by censor, unless of course, when compelled to do so by the authorities.

He declares, however, that whatever had occurred, his feelings had remained unaltered with regard to Church and King, and he gave an

irrefutable strength to his vindications, by pointing out that, besides the publications for the States-General objected to, he had gone on publishing breviaries, missals, diurnals and other liturgical books.

His representations were if anything confirmed, and more especially so as regards his stay in Leyden, by his praise of the toleration which he had always encountered in his calvinistic surroundings. He writes to De Çayas : « I was always treated most cordially, notwithstanding that they all knew me to remain at all times faithful to our holy catholic religion, and that at any time I would have protested to print any book contrary to that religion, but only such classic works, suitable for all schools in all countries » (13).

At one time, however, a somebody whose name is not known, declaring to act in name of a certain Don Antonio, wanted Plantin to print a tract against the King. Plantin « flatly » (*tout à plat*) refused, as he writes, and when the Dutch States, in opposition to his

will, authorized that the printing of the tract should be done in his establishment, he decided to leave Leyden. For all that, he continued none the less at times to praise the tolerance of the Dutch, and more especially that of the Leyden University.

He that did most to persuade Plantin to come back to Antwerp, was the theologian and humanist Laevinus Torrentius, a faithful friend, who had been made bishop of Antwerp in 1575, but who entered upon his office only in 1587. Immediately after Plantin's departure for Leyden, Torrentius wrote to him telling him how deeply he regretted that Plantin should sojourn in a calvinistic town, and what difficulty he had in convincing the printer's old friends, that he was not a renegade. He promises him, in name of the Vatican, a large amount of fine work, and begs him, whatever betide, not to publish anything heretical. Also, Plantin's first visit, when he came back from Holland, was to Torrentius, who at that time lived at Liege. It was

with pleasure that to that friend too, he sent the certificate of orthodoxy, which the prebendary Walter van der Steghen, had given him. Shortly after the Spanish fury he had been offered by Henri III, and had refused, the office of « *typographus regius* » for France; and so he likewise refused several tempting offers made to entice him to other countries, among others there was that of Charles Emmanuel I, duke of Savoy, who wanted to induce him to come and establish himself at Turin. He followed Torrentius's advice, remained true to Antwerp, and became once more the printer of Church and King, and was buried there in 1589, in the choir of the Cathedral.

And yet he was not the exemplary, docile catholic, unconditionally without the slightest restriction, finding peace and absolute tranquillity in the bosom of his church. Actually he does not seem to have been a calvinist, and as regards that, we may credit his many affirmations of true catholic



faith, but it is a fact, that he in succession joined two sects, which, by an ordinary catholic, can hardly be termed other than heretical. The first was that of the « House of Love » (Huis van Liefde), which had at its head Hendrik Niclaes, and advocated a rather intricate mystical doctrine. Plantin was deeply devoted to their sect. He printed secretly all the books of Niclaes, and made it possible for one of his workmen, Aug. van Hasselt, to establish himself at Vianen, and there to print the tracts of Niclaes. Plantin remained in correspondence with Niclaes until during the rule of Alva, when Philip II favoured him with the authorisation to print the *Biblia regia*, several other liturgical works, and even the *Index librorum prohibitorum*. The foundations of Niclaes's conceptions were however very characteristic of those troubled times, when human beings fought each other to the death because of dogmas and ritual. The outward form of worship hardly counted with Niclaes; what mattered most was to be

imbued with love, with the real love of God and of our neighbour. Nicolaes even allowed his followers to belong to another church. He himself, the head of the House of Love, declared himself to be a humble Roman Catholic, and Plantin, as regards himself, could reason likewise.

After 1567, Plantin left the Nicolaes community, and became one of the followers of Hendrik Janssen, better known as Barrefelt or Hiël, who at one time had also belonged to the House of Love. The followers of Barrefelt too attached not the slightest importance to the authority of texts and dogmas. Self-sacrifice, love and humility of heart were the means by which, in their mystical aspirations, they endeavoured to become identified with God. Plantin kept up a brisk correspondence with Barrefelt, and that sometimes in a secret, conventional language. He printed the *Verborgen Akkerschat* («Hidden Field treasure»), the book that was most honoured by the sect. He was the head

of the Antwerp group, to which several members of his family also belonged. Shortly before his death even, Plantin received a hearty epistle from Barrefelt, in which the latter called him his « friend dear to his heart and brother in the Lord ».

We understand very well that Plantin was quite taken up with contemplations so entirely in harmony with his innermost feelings, as shown in so many of his writings, and which, none the less, left him the conviction or the delusion, of remaining a true Roman Catholic. For Barrefelt's followers, no more than those of Niclaes, were called upon to renounce the established church of which they were a member. For them too, the outward cult had nothing more than a symbolic meaning.

And it is a fact, that Plantin never considered himself a heretic, neither as follower of Niclaes nor of Barrefelt. When in a letter to De Çayas, dated 1575, he admits that at a certain period, his views were not quite free from

Calvinistic influence, then he refers neither to Niclaes nor to Barrefelt's doctrine, to which at that time he still adhered. Besides, his intimate letters to his children, in which he shows himself entirely as he is, and where there can be no question of double-heartedness, clearly prove that he never felt himself to be a heretic. For instance, he advises his daughter Madeleine never to meddle with idle gossip, unless the honour of God or of the Holy Church be in cause, or that somebody « maliciously » counselled her to accept heretical doctrines. « For as you have to guard yourself against all heresy as if it were a deadly poison, thus also you may not suffer any such insult. »

Is it not, as if Plantin, in this doctrine of self-sacrifice, which sought salvation in the living love, and was, all things considered, but a striving to attain human perfection, found as it were a refuge, where thinkers of all creeds, that felt nobly, could meet as brothers, instead of fighting and exterminating one another without mercy ?

Is not that predilection for the mysticism of Niclaes and Barrefelt as it were a venting of the same thirst for tolerance, which in 1580 made Plantin long for some kind of peace of religion, for a peace obtained by amiable compromise ? Be that as it may, Plantin was the friend of many high-minded and remarkable men of various religious convictions, and his whole personality stands too high for that to be ascribed to calculation or a passion for material gain. What appealed most to Plantin, was the aristocracy of mind, the power of knowledge ; and a conception of religion, which, while it satisfied the mystic cravings of his spirit, did not hinder him from associating with those that held religious opinions different to his, could not but be acceptable to Plantin.

According to tradition, Plantin is the author of the well-known sonnet « Le Bonheur de ce Monde », which, in the printing-shop of the Antwerp museum, is still printed on the old press, with the XVIth century cha-

racters, and which visitors take with them as a souvenir of their visit to the time-honoured institution.

This is the famous sonnet :

Le Bonheur de ce Monde

*Avoir une maison commode, propre et belle.
Un jardin tapissé d'espaliers odorans,
Des fruits, d'excellent vin, peu de train, peu d'enfans,
Posséder seul sans bruit une femme fidèle.*

*N'avoir dettes, amour, ni procès, ni querelle,
Ni de partage à faire avecque ses parens,
Se contenter de peu, n'espérer rien des Grands,
Régler tous ses desseins sur un juste modèle.*

*Vivre avecque franchise et sans ambition,
S'adonner sans scrupule à la dévotion,
Domter ses passions, les rendre obéissantes.*

*Conserver l'esprit libre, et le jugement fort,
Dire son Chapelet en cultivant ses entes,
C'est attendre chez soi bien doucement la mort. (14)*

Some people have thought to discern a contrast between the philosophy as exposed in this sonnet, philosophy which, at a first superficial reading may appear to have an epicurean character,

and the earnest, austere way of looking at life, which we discover in Plantin's « *Correspondance* ». Upon closer examination, however, one comes to the conclusion that the sonnet is in perfect harmony both with Plantin's way of thinking and of living.

The poem is neither exclusively sensual nor cynical. Its epicurism is expressed so earnestly and so devoutly, that what with its restraining and disdaining of the passions, it acquires if anything the character of a kind of neo-stoicism, such as was dear to the heart of Justus Lipsius, Plantin's bosom-friend.

We cannot find strange that the Antwerp printer should have appreciated a beautiful house, a garden, a well-spread board and a glass of good wine, even though he were a man with strict principles. Was not Plantin the first builder of that fine home, which, later, his grandson Balthasar Moretus made so beautiful, that it was looked upon together with the home of P. P. Rubens, as the finest of the town. Did

he not belong to a period, in which, according to De Lobel, the love for gardens and plants was more developed in his country than in any other (15)? Was he not the tenant and in later years the owner of a fine garden at Berchem, a suburb of the town (16); was he not the friend of the best-known botanists of his time : Dodoens, Clusius and De Lobel; and did he not exchange as costly gifts, with his good friends Arias Montanus, Justus Lipsius and others, rare seeds of herbs and flowers (17)? And more than once, as it appears by the accounts in the archives of the Plantin-Moretus Museum, a cask of wine was brought into the house.

« To have few children » is a wish which in this sonnet we must not consider from a modern, more or less neo-Malthusianistic point of view. It is quite plausible that Plantin, who had six children, had lost a little son and who got to know much anxiety and trouble through his daughters, should look upon a small number of children

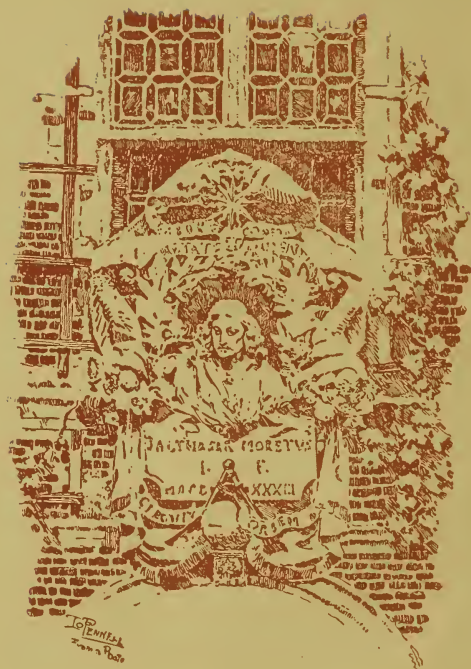
as a source of less trouble, consequently also of happiness. « To have no debts » must also have been an ideal for a man, who all his life had to contend with pecuniary difficulties, which caused him much suffering, as is shown in so many of his letters. And that « to expect naught from the Great », is it not a cry from the very heart, of that royal printer, who had so implicitly relied on the promises made by Philip II, and who by waiting so long for their realisation, at length found himself in such a critical fix ?

The sonnet is an enumeration of all the earthly possessions that Plantin appreciated, also of those that he did not possess but which, as a warrant for greater happiness, he considered it worth while to long for; and he probably wrote all that on a sunny day, when drawing up the balance of his life, with the good humour which, notwithstanding the carking cares that weighed him down, never entirely deserted him.

This sonnet discloses the more intimate side of Plantin's humani-

tarian spirit of higher intellectuality, which radiates from the whole of Plantin's life, and that same spirit, as it were, that friendly, peaceful, earnest spirit is still present in the Plantin Museum, the beautiful Antwerp home, where this wonderful man is made immortal by his works. This home, where hovers the breath of history, is a sanctuary of the mind, drawing within its walls the thinkers of the whole world, who come there to live an hour of intellectual reverie under the spell of the past. Only the sailing clouds, chased by the breeze, as they pass over the peaceful inner-court, on their way to the river Scheldt, tell us of life that without thinking lets itself be lived. All other things speak of the mind in a high state of tension, everything there has been born from it, and directed by brain-power. The restless life of the town, with its craving after Jordaens jollity, a life so healthily vehemement that it ceases to be sinful, has its full fling among wenches and sailors in the near neighbourhood, but that life

dies out at the walls of this building,
which, for centuries past, in the midst
of a heathenish, epicurean hubbub,
arises, a peaceful, stately strong-hold
of thought.



NOTES

(1) ... Nous n'avons jamais eu rien de nos parents que charges et cousts et si avons commencé premièrement mesnage du seul labeur de nos mains.

(2) J'ay rencontré entre autre un jeune homme fort docte ès langues Hébraïque, Chaldéenne, Grecque et Latine, auquel, pour mieux l'entretenir et l'avoir à commodité, sous l'espoir que j'ay eu d'aider avec le temps au bien public, et en la faveur des lectres et de telles vertus rares qui sont en iceluy, j'ay baillé ma fille aisnée en mariage ».

(3) « Ung jeune homme assés expert et bien entendant les langues Grecque, Latine, Espagnole, Italienne, Françoisse, Allemande et Flamande. Il m'a tousjours servi, en temps de fa-

veurs et en temps contraire, sans m'abandonner pour fortune qui m'advint ni pour promesses ou attraict qu'autres-luy ayent sceu faire, mesme en luy présentant trop plus riches mariages et gages qu'il n'estoit en mon pouvoir de luy donner. »

(4) *Autant incivile et non acceptable que seroit cele d'ung jeune homme fort et robuste pour marcher de soy mesmes qui voudrait persuader a son Père viel et caduc de luy bailler pour tousjours le baston duquel il s'apuye pour marcher.*

(5) « ... tenés vous asseurée que vostre mère ne moy n'avons ni n'aurons souvenance des fautes passées que recongnoissés pour vous en porter rancunne ne despit, sachants bien que faillir est commun a l'ignorance, mais c'est a vous de vous en souvenir pour éviter le mal qui s'ensuict. »

(6) « *L'impression d'Anvers (dont les mots estoynt au paravant usurpez par les nations voysines comme un proverbe de chose de peu d'estime) a depuis esté admirée, prisée et recher-*

chée d'un chascun sur ledit nom d'Anvers et de Plantin : non seulement par les voysins et gens de moyenne qualité: mais aussi par les estranges nations et par les plus grands seigneurs de l'Europe, tant Ecclesiastiques que seculiers. »

(7) « Ce n'est plus le faict de celuy à qui cela ne luy vient comme de nature ou de certaine inclination divine joincte avec un continuel et assidu labeur et ferme assurance de se gouverner prudemment avec les compagnons qui communement sont maligns et infidèles à leurs maistres et pleins de monopoles ainsi que maintesfois je l'ay experimenté principalement quand ils se peuvent apercevoir que leur maistre a besogne commandée. »

(8) ... les compagnons ouvriers de l'imprimerie sentants que j'estois chargé de besongner s'estoyent bendés contre moy de sorte que j'avois (outre la nécessité d'argent) esté contrainct de les chasser de ma maison et de faindre ne vouloir plus rien imprimer dont finalement s'est ensuivy qu'ils me

soyent venus et ayant envoyé me supplier de leur vouloir pardonner leurs fautes et les recevoir à la besogne ».

(9) ... si la nonchallance, yvrognerie et malice des ouvriers pouvoit estre par quelques loix, raisons ou conditions reprimée et reduicte à quelques certaines journées de besongner ».

(10) Nostre bon Dieu m'a donné le courage d'y employer et consumer toutes les facultés non seulement qu'il luy avoit pleu me donner, mais aussi toutes les faveurs et deniers qu'il m'a oncques esté possible de recouvrer ou de tirer de mes amis ou d'autres.

(11) Quant à ce que me debvés je vous donne commission plainière de vous solliciter vous mesmes selon la commodité que vous aurés de soulager ma nécessité : qui est plus grande que je ne le voudrois manifester : nonobstant quoy Dieu par sa grâce m'entretient le courage tel que l'avés veu, voire me l'augmente en patience à la mesure que les urgentes nécessités croissent. »

(12) Je n'ay oncques adhéré ni

favorisé aux sectaires et que, pour vivre ne pour mourir, je ne veux me séparé de l'obeissance de nostre Roy très catholique, nostre mère sainte esglise, en la foy de laquelle je pretends vivre et mourir.

(13) ... nonobstant que chacun sceust què je demeurois tousjours constant en nostre sainte religion catholique et que j'eusse protesté de jamais n'imprimer aucun livre repugnant à icelle mais seulement les livres d'humanité propres à toutes escholes en tous païs.

(14) The Happiness of this World. To have a comfortable house, clean and beautiful, a garden with walls decked with sweet-smelling espaliers, fruit, excellent wine, a small establishment, few children, to possess alone, in quiet, a faithful wife; to have neither debts, love affairs, nor lawsuit nor quarrel, nor anything to share with relations; to be content with little, not to expect anything from the Great, to regulate all one's purposes according to a proper pattern; to live open-heartedly

and without ambition, without scruples to give oneself up to one's devotions, to subdue one's passions, to render them obedient; to keep the mind free and one's judgment strong, to tell one's beads while growing one's (grafted) trees, is most peacefully, at home, to wait for death.

(15) *Plantarum Historia*, preface, Publish. Plantin 1576.

(16) *Archives of the Plantin Museum* LIX, 25; LX, 34.

(17) *Correspondance*, VIII & IX, page 430, 511.

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